Stereotypical Images and Enemy Perceptions in the Greco-Turkish Conflict: Is it Possible to Change Stereotypes?

The Greco-Turkish conflict is a product of long-standing traumatic experiences that are based on Stereotypical Images of the Enemy. In each country there is a complicated mechanism that promotes patriotism by systematically devaluating the "other". The traumatic experiences are being preserved ad hoc by the national history, the textbooks, the media and the traditional narration and literature. The 1999 earthquakes and what followed created a "positive entrapment" for the people of Greece and Turkey. The Image of the "other" that was brought forth during the earthquakes, straightforwardly contradicted the one that was held by the two peoples in the past. The "seismic diplomacy" created the momentum for the amelioration of the Greco-Turkish relations and the rejection of some attributes of the Images of the Enemy.

The aim of the article is to examine the Greco-Turkish conflict by applying Image Theory. It will attempt to show that Stereotypical Images can be differentiated if the existing *momentum* of the Greco-Turkish case is properly grasped.

The Greco-Turkish conflict is a typical paradigm of a long-standing conflict that is based on Stereotypical Images of the Enemy. Frozen relationships and occasional tensions are boosted by paranoid fears, fostered by introvert perceptions of reality. Only the last decade there has been some progress in the Greco-Turkish relationships. Although the Stereotypical Images still prevail, the 1999 earthquakes created the *momentum* for a rapprochement. There is not yet a clear answer if the Seismic empathy will lead to reconciliation but it seems that the Greeks and the Turks are "trapped' together in a positive environment where setback seems almost impossible.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is an endemic phenomenon in the international society. As such, there exist several theories that attempt to analyze and resolve it. The traditional approaches to the phenomenon such as coercion appear to be unsuccessful – at least in the long run[1]. Likewise, the traditional techniques applied for the resolution of conflicts offer short-term solutions and appear to be inadequate[2]. This kind of solutions and proposals may in the best of occasions lead to settlements. To distinguish between settlement and resolution, a settlement is an imposed solution mainly based on coercive activity while the resolution of a conflict is a self-sustaining and non-coercive solution, accepted by all the parties involved[3]. Conflict resolution reflects the contemporary scholarly literature, which deserves some space in the practical arena considering the unsuccessfulness of the traditional approaches[4]. Unlike the scholars following

the Realist and the Marxist tradition that understand conflict as an objective reality, the conflict researcher, primarily based on the pluralist tradition, perceives Conflict as a subjective situation[5]. Subjectivist theories of Conflict claim that the conflictual condition exists as far as the disputants perceive it as such[6]. Thus, the resolution of a conflict can be realized through mutual understanding. The parties have to understand that is more profitable to search for common benefits than to stay in a conflictual condition that is costly for both. Conflicts occur due to incompatibility of interests. We can distinguish two kinds of incompatibility: "real" and "illusory". Both kinds are functions of the perceptions of the parties rather than physical facts[7]. Thus, an approach would make them realize that the perceived zero-sum situation was based on false assumptions and misconceptions of the intentions and generally the attributes of the other. This is the image one holds for another.

Creating and Maintaining Images

In both peaceful and conflictual conditions the potential or actual disputants create and maintain images of the other and of oneself. These images exist on the individual as well as on the group level.

The Image is what one believes to be true, his subjective knowledge. This knowledge structure largely affects behaviour. If there is a change in the perceived information, it may consequently follow a change of the image. *This Image is built up as a result of all past experience of the possessor of the image. Part of the image is the history of the image itself*"[8].

It is equally easy to create an enemy as well as an ally image[9] based on the simplifications performed by the minds of the people. These simplifications are inevitable because *"The human imagination can only bear a certain degree of complexity. When the complexity becomes intolerable, it retreats into symbolic images* "[10]. The symbolic images play a major role in the international relations. *"The symbolic image of one's own nation is tinged with ideas of security or insecurity depending on one's image of other nations* "[11]. A nation that feels threatened by others, in its attempt to increase its own security, generates insecurity to other nations that perceive its behaviour to be aggressive. (Scheme 1) This "action-counteraction" phenomenon can be observed in the case of arm races and it is a result of the practice of the nations to think of their security in absolute terms[12]. (Scheme 1)

When in conflict, the opposed parties create and maintain enemy images of the other that trap the individuals and the groups in certain functions. Inflows that threaten the image are being rejected ignored or perverted, while these that serve its preservation are being accepted as perfectly consistent with the desired outcome[13]. This phenomenon can be observed in the public opinion as well as in the decision-makers' level. The public opinion due to its access to limited or canalized information can be manipulated. The decision-makers on the other hand although they have a more complete access to information, they often misperceive them. For example, a concession made by the other side towards a peaceful approach may be explained as a weakness that gives the opportunity to get the upper hand[14] or as a misleading conspirational trick[15]. Thereafter, the party that perceived the concession as a weakness may apply politics that could lead to escalation of the hostility.

This example reveals the crucial role the image plays in the configuration of behaviour. As Kenneth Boulding points out, "*it is always the image not the truth that immediately determines behaviour. We act according to the way the world appears to us, not necessarily according to the way it "is"* "[16]. Thus, the actions of the decision-makers do not respond to some objective facts given by the objective reality but they rather derive from the image the decision-makers hold for the situation. If this image does not keep up with the expectations it may be revised while if it is close to what is considered to be "the truth", then the image remains unchanged[17].

Up to a certain point, the images are self-justifying. One that is suspicious and believes that everybody is hostile will sooner or later confirm his suspicions. Reversely, one that believes that everyone is friendly and acts likewise, it is likely to prove his self right. On the contrary, images, under certain circumstances may be self-defeating. According

to Boulding, the way images are reversed from self-justifying to self-defeating is unsolved[18]. We believe that by applying conflict analysis theory and practices, it is possible to turn self-justifying images to self-defeating. The contact between the parties on the social and the political level can lead to that direction. Of course, this task is extremely difficult because, as mentioned above the individuals or parties tend to infiltrate the inflows in such a way that the present image will stay firm. In addition, as it will be mentioned below, the images of the parties are self-justifying because they serve certain needs and purposes. In-Groups need enemy images to constitute themselves as such. Enemy images serve national completion and national integrity purposes and are skilfully used by the powerful for domestic consumption.

In-Groups, Out-Groups and National Image

Individuals define themselves to be part of groups. An individual considers oneself part of several groups at the same time. As for all social creatures, the group is the unit of survival for humans. Groups provide physical protection from hostile environments and external enemies as well as psychological security[19]. Even in the complex and globalized world of our era the dominant group in which one determines himself to be primarily part of, is the national[20]. Thus if an individual defines oneself as part of the national in-group, then the "other" is perceived as an out-group belonging to an alien national totality. Moreover, in a conflictual condition this differentiation (may also be primarily ethnic, racial or religious) is crucial while it defines the threshold between "us" (in-group) and "them" (out-group)[21]. This differentiation is stereotypical in nature. The function of the stereotypes is to create images of the out-group and the in-group that "explain, rationalize and justify" the intergroup relationship and behaviour[22].

According to Alexander, Brewer, and Herrmann, *"Enemy images have been treated in political science in terms analogous to how psychologists conceive of a stereotype. The enemy is seen as motivated by a very few self-serving interests all of which are judged to be evil and immoral"*[23]. Moreover, the enemy is considered as conspirational and led by monolithic heads. The adversary may act in order to intimidate others by using constant threats but actually, he is overweening, hollow and weak. In fact, the enemy is clever and coward at the same time. He takes advantage of the circumstances and acts when the other seems weak and retreats when he senses the other to be stronger and decisive to retaliate.[24]

Each party of the conflict believes that the enemy is expansive, aggressive and capable of great brutality and evil-doing. In addition he is insincere and untrustworthy[25]. It is normal that one side projects its negative traits as being the basic traits of the other[26]. *"The perceptions of the enemy very often tend to mirror each other-that is, each side attributes the same virtues to itself and the same vices to the enemy"*. [27] This phenomenon is known as the mirror images. When the parties have mirror images it is not easy for their relationships to be defused.[28] *The extreme form of this tendency is dehumanization, in which members of the opposing group are considered to be less than human."*[29] Thus, they *"hardly deserve respect or consideration. This conception of the enemy becomes the moral duty of every citizen, and those who question it are denounced"*[30]. The conception of the enemy can be understood through the defence mechanism of projection. *"Projection is the ascription to others of impulses, feelings and other characteristics which exist in an individual but which he cannot admit to itself"*[31]. The next step is scapegoating, that is to pin the other side for all the problems that you have[32].

Images of the Elite, Images of the Mass

In order to understand satisfactorily the functions of the Images we have to concentrate on two different levels; the image of the small group of the decision-makers and the image of the mass.

a)   The images of the decision-makers are crucial since they define the important decisions concerning the governing of a state. They decide for the creation or the breaking of an alliance or a treaty, for the use of force and for war or for peace. These decisions led by the images of the powerful elites, form the major events of the international reality.

b)   The image of the mass seems less important since the ordinary people have no direct access in the decision-making procedure. The truth is that the elite needs the support of the masses in order for its authority to be legitimized. Especially in the democratic regimes, the elites cannot diverge too much from the image of the mass because such a move is costly in support and power.[33]

Although the powerful ones are under obligation to represent the mass, they have also the ability to manipulate the images. They can impose the images they wish to the masses. Nevertheless such images are fragile. In long-established nations the elites share the images with the mass rather than impose them.[34] And this is because the stereotypical and national images are long-established too.

Generally, the *habitus*, namely "*the agents of socialization – the family, the school, the peer group, and the media –* "*provide the basic knowledge and the "cognitive maps that allow us to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences.*"[35]

Informally, the images are transmitted through the family. They have the form of traditions and oral historical heritage. The family group shapes the national images[36] that are presented as the "reality" since they pass from generation to generation[37] as the objective truth. These informal images are usually traumatic group experiences of the hostile out-groups and hymns to the virtue of the in-group.

Formally, the images are built through "*schooling and the written word*"[38]. History and its learning in formal education are of great importance, forming the image of the individual as well as the one of the group. *The national image is essentially a historical image – that is, an image which extends through time, backward into a supposedly recorded or perhaps mythological past and forward into an imagined future.*"[39] "*One of the main purposes of national education is to distort the image of time and space in the interests of the nation.*"[40] "*A nation is the creation of its historians, formal and informal. The written word and public education contribute enormously to the stability and persistence of the national images.*"[41] The function of the historians of this kind is to teach history from a certain distorted perspective that favours the image of the receiver. The end of this perspective is to raise faithful patriots and the cost is the encryption of reality (or the closest to actuality). This perspective is narrow and nationalistic. The geography as well as the history of the nation is taught in great detail while the corresponding geography and history of the rest of the world is presented briefly[42] and is shadowed by the greatness of the own heroic nation. What is more powerful in the creation of the national history than of the geography is the fact that the misuse "cannot be rectified by personal experience."[43]

To sum up, "*There can be little doubt that poets, historians, writers, and cartoonists play an enormous role in the development of these (symbolic) images.* […] *it is the image of the past that gives rise both to the image of the present and of the future.*"[44]

THE GRECO-TURKISH CONFLICT UNDER THE PRISM OF IMAGE THEORY

Roots, Origin

The creation of the national image and the image of the enemy in Greece and Turkey is performed by the typical sources of promotion of nationalism. Namely, national history, textbooks and the informal historical heritage.

In Greece, the national myth is built upon the long-standing enemy that kept the "Greek Nation" enslaved for four hundred years. In Turkey, nationalism has its roots in the Young-Turk notion and the movement of Kemal Ataturk.

As mentioned above the image is essentially historical. Thus, in both countries history was written in such a way that exaggerates the attributes of the in-group and reduces the value of the out-group. The purpose of these historical

constructions is to justify the existence of a nation state and to surround the national corm with warm patriots.

The Greek National Continuity Theory

By the time of the birth of the Greek Nationalism, no other contesting nationalism wished to assume the Ancient Greek or the Byzantine past. The modern Greeks as the inhabitants more or less of the same area with the Ancient Greeks, considered themselves to be their offspring. In the same way the Greeks perceived the Byzantine Empire as an immiscibly Greek Empire[45] urging its Christian-Orthodox character. The national historian Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos set out the difficult task of the synthesis of the three, completely different historical eras: the classical Greek, the Byzantine, and the Modern Greek era.

The final thesis of Paparrigopoulos – a thesis that still prevails – was that there is an unbroken continuity of the Greek nation from the era of the Ancient Greeks up to nowadays. Adopting this hypothesis Greece not only achieved chronic, but also territorial unity. Namely, the Paparrigopoulos' scheme backed Greek irredentism, the "Megali Idea".[46] The "Megali Idea" was the vision of a purely Greek Empire that would encircle the Aegean Sea and was born along with the Greek independence movement of 1821.[47] The "Megali Idea" constituted the *raison d'etre* of the Greek Kingdom[48] up to 1923.

The Turkish Historical Thesis

 Turkish nationalism was born inside the declining Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, the Ottoman Empire was trying to promote reforms in order to survive and on the other hand there was a rise of a new nationalism inside the elite of the society. The doctrine of Ottomanism (Osmanlilik) was more a kind of Ottoman/Muslim patriotism rather than of a modern nationalism. In the end of the 19th century, a new notion emerged, that of Turkism (Turkculuk). It was a nationalistic notion introduced from Europe by members of the ruling elite.[49] The Young Turk movement favored the "conversion" to Turkism and prepared the ground for Kemalism."[50] The poet and sociologist Ziya Gokalp introduced a nationalist doctrine that was combining Islam as an element of culture, identity, and connection with the Muslims, and westernism. This doctrine acquired political and social hypostasis with the Kemalist movement.[51]

With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Kemal Ataturk forwarded a number of reforms. Among them there was the development of a national interpretation of the Turkish history out of the Ottoman tradition that was underscoring the Asian roots of the Turks and promoting the Turkish language. The aim of this specific reform was to establish a new national identity.[52]

The corresponding to the Paparrigopoulos' scheme on the Turkish side is the Turkish Historical Thesis (Turk Tarih Tezi) and the Sun-Language Theory (Gunes-Dil Teorisi). According to Hercules Millas, the Turkish Historical Thesis predicates that the Turkish nation is immemorial and has a decisive and extremely positive contribution to the world civilization. The Thesis was consolidated with the Sun-Language Theory, which proved that the Turkish language is one of the principal languages of mankind.[53]

The above theories serve two functions. First, they break the link of the Turks with the sultanate of Osman, the Seltzuks and the characterization "Muslim" and claim that they are an arithmetically great and ancient race, and second, the Turks are presented as natives of Anatolia/Asia Minor. For this purpose, like the Ancient Greeks above, the ancient peoples of this territory were turned to Ancient Turks.[54]

Written by Nikolaos G. Pasamitros

National Education, Textbooks and the Image of the "Other"

The way history is constructed and presented serves the needs of the Nation-state. The textbooks of a country are closely interrelated with the national history in the sense that either the national history is communicated to the youth through the textbooks or the textbooks constitute the roots of the ethnocentric historical constructions. What was really comfortable in the case of Greece and Turkey is the fact that in both countries, liberation was achieved by fighting one another.[55] The building and strengthening of national identity procedure presupposes the idealization of "us" and the demonization of the "other". The purpose of the textbooks is to enforce the pride for the *patria* and turn it to devotion by constructing historical enemies.[56]

Greek textbooks promote a negative image of the Turks. The "other" is described as barbaric, rude warrior, uncivilized, invader, sneaky and dishonest.[57] The students learn that the Turks are responsible for the four centuries of slavery (Tourkokratia) that impeded the development of Greece. The textbooks contain thorough descriptions of the numerous acts of violence committed by the Turks. Reversely, the Greeks are presented as the perfect race.[58]

Turkish textbooks are a Mirror Image of the Greek ones. The Turks are perfect and the Greeks are the ones that commit massacres because they hate the Turks. The Greeks are unreliable, unfaithful, cunning, and insatiable.[59] The Greeks were enjoying special privileges under the Ottoman rule and they were almost independent and very wealthy. Nevertheless, they did not appreciate this tolerance and revolted with the protection of the West to fulfil the "Megali Idea".[60] This notion of the past explains the present and predicts the future Greek aspirations.[61]

Maintaining the Stereotypes, Creating and Preserving the Traumatic Experiences In textbooks, skills like critical thinking and reasonable knowledge of the historical reality are being sacrificed[62] for national solidity purposes. In addition, intentionally creating and reminding the people the traumatic experiences of the recent and distant past lead to national unity based on the demonization of the «other». This is achieved through schooling, the media, and the tradition. "*The collective memory in both Greece and Turkey is continuously nourished by reminders of past enmity in history textbooks and the media.*"[63]

Schoolbooks refer in great detail and with an emotional style to events that underscore the brutality of the "other". A typical example is the 1922 Asia Minor War. The Turks underline the brutality of the expansive Greeks who were killing civilians in their effort to fulfill the "Megali Idea"[64] and the Greeks highlight the massacres committed by the Turks in Izmir during the retreat of the Greek army. Throughout the patriotic literature we can find negative characterizations and stereotypical presentation of the "Other"[65].

The media contribute to the maintenance of the stereotypes and the preservation of the traumatic experiences. The journalists as representatives of a national group hold a certain Image of the "other" which is based on a *national consensus*.[66] Thus, the interpretation of the press is bound by the national stereotypes and is based on the in-group, out-group dyad. What maintains the stereotypes is the fact that while the journalists are conscious that the Greek and the Turkish viewpoints are in direct opposition, they do not accept "*that their views are subjective and nationally biased.*"[67] Another reason for the maintenance of the stereotypes is the urge of the media to attract consumers at any cost. In this effort, the journalists use tactics such us prejudice, one-sidedness and provocation to excite the public.[68] On occasions like the Imia/Kardak crisis, the Ocalan case and even the everyday aircraft dogfights, the media appear nationally biased using an emotionally charged rhetoric.

Religious Fundamentalism

Written by Nikolaos G. Pasamitros

Though Fundamentalism is considered a phenomenon that reappeared recently in the Muslim world, and attracted numerous researchers after the Twin Towers, it is a notion that can be found in most of the religions. Fundamentalism derives from the interpretations of the religious dogmas.[69]

The Greek-Orthodox fundamentalists claim that they profess the only right teaching of Christianity. They worship the past and any innovation is unwelcome. They are aggressive against everyone that does not share their worldview and are ready to impose them "God's will" with the use of force.[70]

Likewise, Muslim Fundamentalism criticizes the West for being amoral, materialistic and unequal promoting selfishness, violence and power as an end in itself. On the contrary, they propose the implementation of pure Islam without the warp caused by the Western value system.[71]

To conclude, the Greek-Orthodox fundamentalists reject the Turks as infidels and at the same time the West as a false route of Christianity that assists the Turks in their dark plans. The Turk Fundamentalists reject the Greeks as infidels and as the "spoiled child of the West". The mirror Images at this point are more than obvious.

Decision – Making: Entrapped Policies, Populism and the Fear of Betrayal

The decision-makers are the ones that designate the fate of a state. They are the representatives of the people and the society, and the mirror of the country to the international society.

We believe that the Greeks and Turks decision-makers act according to certain axes; their perception of reality as claimed in the theoretical chapter, temporary opportunism and populism, and the fear of betrayal.

Having started from a subjectivist point of view it is more than normal to say that the decision-makers respond to a perceived image of the "truth". Being a part of the same educational system as the people of their states, it is natural for the decision-makers to hold the same perceptions, stereotypes and Image of the "other". The attempt to resolve a conflict by applying politics that have as a starting point the already established stereotypical viewpoints, leads to dead-ends or even worsening of the existent situation. It is impossible to resolve the Aegean dispute with the Greek politicians starting from the legal rights of Greece to defend its territorial integrity by arming the demilitarized by Treaty islands of the Aegean sea, and the Turks believing that the Greeks intend to turn the Aegean into a "Greek lake". Thus, the decision-makers are victims of the nationalistic bias, built by the *habitus*.

In several occasions the intentional negative presentation of the other and creation of a climate of insecurity serves the ends of the decision-makers. They shape the scene they way they wish in order to gain the support to fulfill their ends. They make public announcements for popular consumption. Populism is part of this strategy. Politicians follow a line that satisfies the people or attracts the voters.

Moreover, a major obstacle towards reconciliation is the fear of betrayal. In the theoretical part, we have seen that when an in-group holds a negative Image of the "other" it becomes a moral duty of every member of the society to defend the national interests. Those that deviate are denounced. Few decision-makers are willing to change their stance against the enemy since it would be costly in the domestic realm. In addition, it would be unusual for a Turk or a Greek politician to render himself responsible for a national sell-out and be characterized a betrayer of the *patria*. As Alexis Heraclides fluently explains, "*any change in the realm of attitudes towards the past is fraught with difficulties, for clearly a friendlier, civilized and likeable 'other', worthy of respect, puts into question the cherished but insecure self-image and collective identity.*"[72]

PRE AND POST EARTHQUAKE. MOMENTUM FOR CHANGE?

Egelados[73]; a Peacemaker or a Backer on Time?

On August 17, 1999, the Marmara region of Turkey was hit by a devastating earthquake. Greece was one of the first countries to send rescue teams. Less than a month later, on September 7, 1999, an earthquake hit the capital of Greece, Athens this time. Correspondingly, Turkey was among the first to send, its already experienced, rescue teams. This humane approach consequently backed the political approach, incarnated by the Foreign Ministers of the two states, George Papandreou and the late Ismail Cem. Moreover, there was a reappearance of positive feelings for the neighbor in both countries. The sympathy for the tragedy of the "other" and the understanding through a common experience seemed that would inflict a serious blow to the stereotypical Images of the past. Though the earthquakes created the *momentum* for the amelioration of the Greco-Turkish relations, we do not present this natural phenomenon as the "magic stick" that suddenly transformed the agelong enemies to beloved friends. This "seismic" diplomacy has a background on the Cem-Papandreou rapprochement. According to Cem himself, "*Back in June 1999 we had already initiated, as two ministers, a process of consultation and joint work on our bilateral issues, which was later expedited by the immense solidarity between our two peoples during the tragic earthquakes*"[74]. The cooperation started when the Turkish Foreign Minister Cem took the initiative to propose to Papandreou joint action against international terrorism. This proposal led to mutual cooperation in the fields of tourism, environment, culture and education.[75] Thus, this radical change in the bilateral relations is more a product of the efforts of the Foreign Ministries and its heads which later mobilized public opinion and attracted popular support with the earthquakes *momentum*, than it is the outcome of the mutual sympathy the people of Greece and Turkey felt for each other in the aftermath of the earthquakes.[76]

Seismic Diplomacy and the Opportunity for Reconciliation

The Ocalan case, except from being the last serious event of tension between Greece and Turkey marked the turning point in their relations. The willingness of the Greek government to reconsider its foreign policy "*gave to the moderates a strong hand within the PASOK* [Social democrats] *party*"[77].

The decision of the Greek Foreign Ministry to alter its stance is of grave importance for the mutual approach that followed. A more Europeanized line incarnated by Papandreou replaced the «no talks with Turkey» dogma of the hardliners[78]. Respectively, on the opposite side of the Aegean, Cem, the Foreign Minister of the Ecevit government, was working based on the same values, having taken the initiative to make the good turn. Moreover, Cem and Papandreou established a common understanding on a personal level.

In the spring of 1999, during the Kosovo crisis Greece and Turkey showed the first signs of a fruitful cooperation[79]. In Papandreou's own words, "*The harrowing war in Kosovo brought home to the Greek people the importance and necessity of good, neighbourly relations. Fear and suspicion have long since given way to a policy of regional cooperation, based on mutual understanding and common interests.*"[80] These words contain the will of the Decision-Makers to stress the role of Greece and Turkey as an adherent of stability and cooperation in the Balkans. In addition, in the summer of 1999, "*both Ministers agreed to establish bilateral committees on a high ranking administrative level to work on so-called low politics issues of mutual interest in order to build mutual confidence. The so-called "high politics issues", such as Cyprus and the Aegean, remained intentionally excluded from the agenda of this incremental dialogue.*"[81]

Whereas, there existed a realization on the decision-making level that cooperation was a more profitable option than confrontation and, there was a change in the stereotypical image regarding, at least, the two Foreign Ministers, this novel policy still lacked popular support. The antiphasis between the Image of the historical Enemy and the cooperation with him would lead to a logical inconsistency.

The earthquakes offered the fertile ground for the transgression. The natural catastrophes of 1999 changed the atmosphere in Greece and Turkey and turned on the green light for an open and manifest application of such politics. The two subsequent earthquakes, "*created a wave of compassion and spontaneous assistance across the borders, and doubtlessly strengthened the spirit of neighbourly good will in both countries.*"[82]

Stereotypical Images and Enemy Perceptions in the Greco-Turkish Conflict: Is it Possible to Cha

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Ahmet Evin offers a thorough description of the contribution of the earthquakes to the radical change of the Greco-Turkish relations, and consequently the Images of the "other" in the two countries: "*The earthquakes* […] *served to reinforce and accelerate the careful, well-orchestrated, but nevertheless self-conscious process of gradual rapprochement that had already been set in motion. The disasters served to focus attention on their shared geography and shared feelings of sympathy, and led to a common understanding of a common destiny. They constituted effective catalysts for helping to break away from ideologically defined roles. The sustained state of tension that had continued since the Imia/Kardak crisis of 1996 gave way to euphoria.* "[83] The earthquakes mobilized public opinion and attracted popular support to civil initiatives for the promotion of a better understanding between the people of Greece and Turkey.[84]

These devastating natural phenomena were proved to be a unique *momentum* for the break down of the stereotypical Images. "*In one fell sweep the deep popular enmity that sustained the politico-military rivalry and antagonism between Ankara and Athens disappeared. It gave way to a kind of solidarity that belied all the nationalist exhortations that dominated political discourse, particularly in Greece.*"[85]

The media played an important role in the promotion of the feelings of empathy. The newspapers passed emotionally charged messages of friendship and solidarity. Furthermore, the journalists stressed the compassion of the people for the tragedy of the "other" by simultaneously criticizing the policies of their governments.[86]

In the Helsinki Summit, the same year, Greece not only did not veto the EU candidacy of Turkey but also supported it, rendering itself a supporter of the Turkish "European perspective". In addition, Greece by supporting the Cyprus candidacy, achieved to satisfy the Greek-Cypriots, and at the same time attempted to separate the Cyprus issue from the Greco-Turkish dispute.

On the civil level, there is an increased contact between Greeks and Turks: Official and unofficial meetings, student exchange programs and cultural exchange, joint research projects, and an upsurge of tourism. Such activities are promoting the constant contact and the familiarization with the "other" and his society. A "positive entrapment" is being created as a safety valve against retrogression.[87]

On the intergovernmental level, in 1999 the official meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries was the first after 40 years.[88] In June 1999 the two sides agreed to hold meetings on several issues, which led to the 2000 bilateral agreements. In addition, a Task Force on cooperation on matters of the EU was formed.[89]

On the regional administration and the higher education level, there is an admirable cooperation among local governments and municipalities and among higher educational institutions.[90]

On the business and commercial level, there was observed an "*increased interest in economic cooperation among businessmen and bankers*" [which can be] "*taken as a litmus test indicating the political stability achieved in the process of détente.*"[91]

In 1998 Greek and Turk businessmen created the Turkish-Greek and the Greek-Turkish business councils. With the Marmara earthquake Greek businessmen associated with the Greek-Turkish business council, assisted their Turk colleagues that were economically stricken. By 2000, the exports-imports between the two countries had more than doubled. Investment went up by 775%.[92] The total volume of trade increased by 250% in the five years to 2004. Greek investment in Turkey, in 2004, represented 3.2% of the total direct foreign investment in the country. Up to 2002 the same variable was recorded under 0.5%.[93] Since then, the Greek-Turkish council is promoting partnership and cooperation among small-sized, medium-sized and major businesses.[94]

This kind of cooperation is not only promoting the civil relations between neighbours. "*Businessmen* […] *quite often acted as intermediaries between political actors.*"[95]

Turkish political leaders responded positively to the proposals for commencing and expanding confidence-building measures.[96] In 2000 the countries agreed to discuss three categories of confidence building measures, all of them

regarding the Evros/Meric river borderline. In 2001, the confidence-building measures were expanded to the military level concerning information exchange and invitations to the scheduled military exercises.[97] We have to note that confidence-building measures are not a panacea on which the two sides can sit back and rely on. Reconciliation is a dynamic process that requires progress on the primary and secondary issues, as well as persistent renewal and confirmation of mutual trust and frank intentions. A clear example of the need for a constantly ongoing process is the April 2005 visit of the Greek Foreign Minister Molyviates to Ankara, which was part of the confidence building measures. A Greek and a Turkish coast guard vessel confronted each other near the Imia/Kardak islets reminding both sides of the 1996 incident. Both Greeks and Turks believed that it was a provocation designed by the other side.[98]

On the less flexible and sensitive military level, on June 2006 the Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis and her counterpart Abdullah Gul decided to establish a direct telephone line between the Turkish Air Operations Centre in Eskisehir and the Greek Operations Centre in Larissa. The measure was proposed by the former Foreign Minister Molyviates during his 2005 visit to Turkey, and was announced by Foreign Minister Gul on May 25, 2006, after a Greek pilot was killed in a mid-air crash during a dogfight with Turkish fighters over the Aegean.[99]

Before and After the Earthquakes. Divergence from the Stereotypical Images?

The decision-makers of both countries, boosted by the initiative of the Europeanist and Internationalist politicians realized that politics of aggressiveness and isolationism were less profitable and more costly than politics of dialogue and cooperation, even if the dialogue does not touch "high politics issues", and cooperation is limited.

The Greek support for the EU membership of Turkey is indicative of the divergence from the long-standing Stereotypical Images held by the decision-makers.[100]

Even if we accept that the contact between the decision-makers did not lead to the rejection of some attributes of the Images of the Enemy, an Image received from direct contact is preferable than the caricatural one perceived through the *habitus*. Besides, a non-conflictual relationship can be based on absolute gains and on mutual understanding of the fears and needs of the other side. Love is not a prerequisite.

The Image of the "other" that was brought forth during the earthquakes straightforwardly contradicted the one that was held by the two peoples in the past. The Asiatic, sneaky, underdeveloped barbarian Turks, and the unreliable, cunning, "spoiled children of the West" Greeks, turned to be humanly, compassionate even friends and brothers. The mutual feelings of empathy awakened did not magically cancel the negative Images and Stereotypes systematically planted for more than a hundred years. Nevertheless, there was a radical and extremely positive alteration on these Images. In the past, the "other" was being elaborately dehumanized in the eyes of the people through schooling, history, literature and the media. During the earthquakes, as Hercules Millas remarks, *'for the first time the television screens in each home in the two countries presented the 'other' as he/she is: real, concrete and alive (not historical). People appeared under the debris, in pain, crying, desperate, as family members, as children, as old people [...]. They looked 'human' and not as a threat. The 'other' never before appeared like that. Even the players of football, of basketball, etc. before, were by definition the rivals, the obstacle. The citizens of the two countries, in each and every house saw – surprised, I assume – the 'other' trying to save 'us' (not harm us), and to rejoice when successful, in tears when failed.*"[101]

Contact under proper circumstances can lead to a positive understanding of the 'other' and his intentions, and is very likely to be judged as sincere. When the 'other' is volunteering to perform actions that are relatively costly and do not seem to be led by self-interest, reciprocation is likely to occur. This process leads to re-individualization of the enemy who was formerly categorized in a stereotypical way as, "the others", a characterization devoid of individuality and humanity.[102] We believe that the earthquakes approach falls into this category.

Surveys conducted in both countries after the seismic diplomacy rapprochement, show that both Greeks and Turks view their neighbours more positively than in the past and deem them rationally. The Greeks estimate that the integration of Turkey in the EU will be in the interest of Greece (46%). In addition, they believe that integration will probably lead to the amelioration of the Greco-Turkish relationships (65%), security of Greece will be enforced (41%), Ankara will be less dangerous (55%), and new investment opportunities will appear (41%).[103]

The Turks believe that the best way to resolve the Greek-Turkish problems is through diplomatic means (48%), 17% consider the civil society level contacts more important, 15% financial cooperation, and only 9% believes that the most appropriate way is by military means. In the same survey, 73% believe that a military confrontation would not solve the Greco-Turkish disputes, while 16% believe that it would. What is extremely important in this survey is that while the Turks consider the Greeks as "enemies", they believe that rapprochement can only by achieved through the peaceful route of diplomacy.[104]

Finally, there exists a steadily built, newborn stream of Europeanism in the civil society of both countries. The Greeks follow the official line of the Greek government supporting the EU candidacy of their neighbours, even though they believe that the impact on the Union will be negative. Populist, nationalistic outbreaks do not fructify that easily anymore. Moreover, the Greeks show an increased interest in the domestic political matters of Turkey, willingly following the Greek media fashion. The stability of the political system and the democratic institutions of Turkey is a common subject in the Greek media. On the opposite shore of the Aegean, the Turkish civil society is highly dissatisfied by the constant interference of the military *status quo* in the political life. This dissatisfaction was manifested in the Presidential election crisis and during the following parliamentary elections where the public opinion supported the Erdogan Islamist Government against the Kemalist Generals.[105] Obviously, the Turks oppose the setback of their country and they do not trust that much anymore the "*derin devlet*", which is a traditional power with stereotypical viewpoints.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO CHANGE STEREOTYPES?

National Image: The Last Great Stronghold of Unsophistication

For Kenneth Boulding, "*the National Image* […] *is the last great stronghold of unsophistication.*" "*There is however, in the course of human history a powerful and probably irreversible movement toward sophistication* "[106] We believe that as long as humans have complex psychological needs, simplified relieving answers will remain popular and the ones that profit from providing them will prevail. If it is possible to restrain these needs from their roots, we may inflict a serious blow to the creative mechanism of National and Stereotypical Images. If not, we could, at least, attempt to limit the negative side effects on the domestic and the international level. In a strict theoretical sense, it is all about human nature and its needs, and the way the societal system covers them. The question that comes along is, when the national identity is built on hate and devaluation of the "other", is the cost of national solidity worth paying for?

Towards a Self-Contained Nationalism

Although the main attributes of the Stereotypical Images remain intact, there exist positive developments that have created the conditions necessary for a rapprochement. The decision-makers after 1996 decided to alter their politics. This was a huge change on the political leadership level. The earthquakes initiated a feeling of sympathy on the civil society level that later on evolved to cooperation. This new contact led to the re-individualization of the enemy.

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Stereotypical Images exist mostly on the group level than on the individual one. There is an upcoming critical stance against the constructed history. This critical stance commenced a dialogue about the textbooks between the ones that fear the rejection of the Images, and those that want them to be removed from the textbooks. People watched public debates, and were set to think on a subject that used to be a taboo a few years ago. The seismic diplomacy and what followed created a "positive entrapment" for the people of Greece and Turkey.

The climate created by the earthquake diplomacy is still unchanged. People have to grab the opportunity and set solid bases for the dynamic process of reconciliation. The "positive entrapment" is a fine opportunity to build mutual trust and respect. However, the approach has to continue unmolested and with brave concessions on both sides. If not, the *momentum* may be lost and the relationships may slip back to the pre-earthquakes conditions.

The question that appears is that, if we reject the norms on which the nations were based on, where would the national identity be grounded on? A method that can promote radical changes is the revision of the basic national myths and perceptions in the sphere of *Consensual Nationalism*. The national interpretation has to be questioned and exposed. This presupposes a change in worldviews and identities.[107] National Identity should be perceived as a modern dogma instead of being accepted as the objective reality. National completion should be interpreted as a modern international phenomenon instead of being considered as the outcome of the struggle against the historical enemy. Such a realization will cancel the necessity of the hostile "other" in the formation of the patriotic and national feeling, and replace it with the self-awareness that their "in-group" is a social and political structure.

While change is possible, it is an extremely difficult task. It is hard to overset age-long perceptions of "us" and "them" that serve social and psychological needs. What makes the task even harder is that national perceptions and Images create a national feeling. This national feeling is created through emotional procedures, and creates, through the traumatic experiences, emotional bonds with the Stereotypical interpretation of reality. It is a great challenge to surpass emotional ankyloses using logical and social scientific means.

CONCLUSION

The Fall of Self-Justifying Images

In the theoretical part of this paper we mentioned that self-justifying Images can be turned into self-defeating. We believe that in the case of Greece and Turkey the appropriate circumstances for such a change are now present. The Image of the unscrupulous Enemy promoted by the national socialization mechanisms was straightly opposed by that of the ordinary people just like "us" projected during the earthquakes. The approach that followed created an Image of the individual that is a far cry from the group one learnt through schooling. A long tradition of ongoing cooperation can be built on the trail of the seismic approach. The continuation of the admirable cooperation between the political, economic, regional and educational authorities along with the subsistence of the confidence building measures and the *vis-à-vis* relations of the civil societies could impoverish the age-long rivalry Image planted by the *habitus*.

Greece and Turkey: Images Fading?

Concisely, the Greco-Turkish conflict as appears today is a product of long-standing traumatic experiences, and is maintained by Stereotypical Images. These traumatic experiences are being preserved *ad hoc* by the national history, the textbooks, the media and the traditional narration and literature. Likewise, the Stereotypical Images are being sustained as the basic element of national socialization. This kind of socialization as Alexis Heraclides notes is literally socialization in conflict.[108] On the other hand, the post-earthquake period shows an increased sympathy between the people, growing cooperation on the low-political and the financial level, and an increased tendency for rebuilding mutual confidence. The Turkish politicians tend to differentiate their stance from that of the military authority. The Turkish public opinion disapproves the interference of the Kemalist generals in politics, showing its

confidence to the Justice and Development Party. The Greek decision-makers follow a pro-Turkish line in the matter of its EU accession irregardless of the political party that governs. Thus, while the Stereotypes still persist, there exists a positive climate that renders the worsening of the relationships inconceivable and unacceptable. Though the decision-makers do not make great steps under the "fear of betrayal", they steadily practice "Europeanistic" politics. Stability and cooperation in the Balkans is one of the fundamental goals. The seismic experience temporarily marginalized the Image of the Enemy. This means that the Stereotypes are still latent (or even on the surface for the rigid nationalists) but they are not expressed with the same intensity and unconstraint as in the past. In fact, judgements like "the Turks are barbarians" and "the Greeks are the spoiled child of the West" are replaced with oversimplified, politicized expressions like, "The Turks are chained by the "deep state"", and "The Greeks are trapped by the radical political elements and the Greek-Cypriots". There have been made some attempts to face the problem from its root. Greece and Turkey slowly but steadily attempt to promote changes in the textbooks, and the journalists avoid creating tension over minor incidents. Given the fact that the textbooks and historiography of most of the European countries followed the route of mildness and science, if the attempts for change keep on, the Turkish and the Greek ones will adjust too. As long as the mechanisms of nationalistic socialization turn to tools for the promotion of critical thought, tolerance, and scientific knowledge, the Images could be built on the realization of nationalism as a modern international phenomenon and not as a dogmatic reality.

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[11]Ibid, pp. 112

[12] Ibid, pp. 112, 113

[13] Jervis, Robert, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton (N.J.), University Press, 1976) pp. 154, 181

[14] Ibid, pp. 120

[15] Alexander, Brewer, and Herrmann, op.cit, pp. 79

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[30] Gladstone, op.cit, pp. 132

[31] Ibid, pp. 133

[32] Ibid

[33] Boulding, *National Images and International Systems*, op.cit, pp. 121, 122

[34] Ibid, pp. 122

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[38] Boulding, *National Images and International Systems*, op.cit, pp. 122

[39] Ibid, pp. 122

[40] Boulding, *The Image*, op.cit, pp. 68

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[42] Ibid, pp. 122

[43] Boulding, *The Image*, op.cit, pp. 69, "We cannot go back to Henry VIII and ask him if he really had six wives in the way that we can go to Australia and see with our own eyes that there is a continent where the map makers say there is."

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[50] Ibid, pp. 221

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[52] Millas, Hercules,
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[53] Ibid, pp. 59, 61

[54] Ibid, pp. 61, 62

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[56] "We understand that there are two ways to dominate a country: With the army and with schools. When the school does not support the army and when the military victory is not accompanied by a school conquest, then this victory is wasted" in

Millas, Hercules, *Images of Greeks and Turks – Textbooks, Historiography, Literature and National Stereotypes*, op.cit, pp. 56, 57

[57] Paparrigopoulos is the creator of the barbaric Turkish Image. Turks are compared to the Ancient Persians producing the Image of the Asian native barbarians that threaten the honor of

the Greeks. In

ibid, pp. 303

[58] Millas in Ayidin & Ifantis (eds), op.cit, pp. 54, 55

[59] Ibid, pp. 54

[60] Millas, *Images of Greeks and Turks – Textbooks, Historiography, Literature and National Stereotypes*, op.cit, pp. 97

[61] Millas, in Ayidin & Ifantis (eds), op.cit, pp. 54

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pp. 109

[64] Millas, *Images of Greeks and Turks – Textbooks, Historiography, Literature and National Stereotypes*, op.cit, pp. 99

[65] Millas in Ayidin & Ifantis (eds), op.cit, pp. 58-61

[66] Millas, Hercules, *A Silenced Aspect of the 'Peace Journalist': His/Her National Identity*, GMJ: Mediterranean Edition 1(2) (Fall 2006), pp. 14, 15

By the term *Consensual Nationalism*, Millas refers to "the manifestation of the minimum national consensus that creates the groups called 'Greeks'."

[67] Ibid, pp. 17

[68] Ibid, pp. 14

[69] Heraclides, *Greece and the "Danger from the East"*, op.cit, pp. 124

[70] Ibid, pp. 124, 353

[71] Ibid, pp. 125

[72] Heraclides in Ayidin & Ifantis (eds), op.cit, pp. 73

[73] According to the Ancient Greek mythology earthquakes are caused by the Giant Egelados.

[74] Gundogdu, op.cit, pp. 107

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[84] Evin, *The Future of Greek-Turkish Relations*, op.cit, pp. 396

[85] Ayman, S. Gulden, *Springtime in the Aegean*, Privateview, (Spring 2000), pp. 57

[86] Gundogdu, op.cit, pp. 112

"A Greek newspaper cried, "We are all Turks" in its issue following the earthquake in Turkey, and a Turkish newspaper responded in Greek: "Efharisto Poli, File"/"Thank You, Neighbor.""

[87] Evin, *Changing Greek Perspectives on Turkey: An Assessment of the Post-Earthquake Rapprochement*, op.cit, pp. 9

[88] Ibid, pp. 9

[89] Heraclides in Ayidin &Ifantis (eds), op.cit, pp. 78, 79

[90] Evin, *Changing Greek Perspectives on Turkey: An Assessment of the Post-Earthquake Rapprochement*, op.cit, pp. 9

[91] Ibid, pp. 9, 15

[92] Heraclides, in Ayidin & Ifantis (eds), op.cit, pp. 77, 78

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[97] Heraclides in Ayidin & Ifantis (eds), op.cit, pp. 79

[98] Evin, *The Future of Greek-Turkish Relations*, op.cit, pp. 402

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[100] Evin, *Changing Greek Perspectives on Turkey: An Assessment of the Post-Earthquake Rapprochement*, op.cit, pp. 17

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